

Old Rock House  
Wharf and Chestnut Streets  
St. Louis, Missouri  
St. Louis City Co.

AD-  
HABS No. 31-5

HABS  
MO.  
96-SALU,  
5-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District No. 31

A. DENNIS  
FEBRUARY 1968

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Wilbur T. Trueblood, District Officer  
1520 Chemical Building  
St. Louis, Missouri

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
DISTRICT OF MISSOURI (NO. 31)

PROJECT NO. 31-5- OLD ROCK HOUSE

Wharf and Chestnut Street,  
St. Louis, Missouri.

Building consists of three stories and  
basement, and is in fair condition.

Date of Erection: 1810 (approximately).  
Number of Drawings: 2.


Owned by the Terminal R. R. Assn.  
(Henry Miller, President).

This building was erected on the street  
facing the Mississippi River, in the  
side of a limestone cliff.

The walls are of rough rubble stone.  
It is now three stories high, but when  
built was but two stories, the gable-end  
toward the street, with sloping roofs.

This is perhaps the oldest building of  
its type in St. Louis. It was built by  
Manuel Lisa, in 1810, for business pur-  
poses, and was used at various times as  
a school house, tavern, city hall, slave  
billet, and jail.

When known as the Green Tree Inn, it  
was frequented by Eugene Field, Mark  
Twain, and other men of note.



WILBUR T. TRUEBLOOD.

Reviewed 1934, H.C.F.

OLD ROCK HOUSE  
St. Louis, St. Louis City County, Missouri.

Additional Data:\*

In 1902 the Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis purchased rather a large section of property along the river front and in tracing the title to the southwest corner of Chestnut Street and the levee, the Title Guarantee and Trust Company ascertained the records to show that the Old Rock House was more than one hundred and thirty-three years old in 1902. Hence the real estate title records in St. Louis show that the house was built prior to 1769. It is definitely known in my family, it has been so known from generation to generation, that this house was erected in 1767 by Joseph Marcheteau, also called Desnoyers (this means "of the nut grove").

The original conveyance, as disclosed by the records of the Title Guarantee and Trust Company, of the Old Rock House was by deed written in French, made in 1769, whereby the property was deeded by Joseph Marcheteau to Francois Bissonet, and that deed described "a certain house 45 x 20 feet at the southwest corner of Chestnut Street and the Levee, and the consideration for the conveyance from Marcheteau to Bissonet was "that the said Francois Bissonet should take care of the said Joseph Marcheteau for the remainder of Marcheteau's life, providing him with lodging, linen and board". The records will show that at a subsequent date the property was transferred to Mary Catherine Marcheteau Desnoyers by probate decree.

In 1798 the last named lady traded the property to John Baptiste Trudeau for certain other lands, and the first official sanction of such conveyance was made by the Spanish Territorial Governor on October 20th, 1799 when the title was confirmed. In 1808 the Trudeaus sold the house to Bernard Pratte. From that time on title to the property changed hands many times, evidently because the location was a popular corner in the old days as it was then in the heart of the business district of the city.

The builder of the house, Joseph Marcheteau, also called Desnoyers as set forth above, deeded the property to his son-in-law Francois Bissonet, and Bissonet in turn deeded the property (probably by probate) to his wife, Mary Catherine Marcheteau Desnoyers, who was the daughter of Joseph Marcheteau Desnoyers, the original builder. The daughter of Francois Bissonet and Mary Catherine Marcheteau (Helene Bissonet) married Joseph La Crois, and their daughter (Marie Therese La Croix) in turn married Joseph Montaigne, and their daughter (Marie Mazzula Montaigne) in turn married David Oliver Branconier, and their daughter (Marie Sophie Branconier) in turn married Michael A. Doyle and I am the son of this last marriage.

At one time the Old Rock House was one and one-half stories in height. Many years ago the old shingle roof gave place to another story and the front of the house was then rebuilt. Along the sides, however, the building I believe is the same today as it was when built in 1767 by my great, great great, great grandfather.

Mr. Marcheteau came to St. Louis in 1765 from Cahokia, Illinois where he had come some years before from French Canada. His son-in-law, Francois Bissonet, also came to St. Louis in 1765 from Fort Chartres, Illinois, of which his brother Napier Bissonet was Commandant.

If you will search the old title records of St. Louis you can verify the above information I am perfectly confident. Manuel Lisa did lease the building some fifty-four years after it was built, and occupied it for some time, but Thomas Scharf in his "History of St. Louis, State and County" is very definitely in error as to the origin of this particular building.

\*From letter of June 16, 1938 by Marcel F. Doyle, 1109 South Cochrane Avenue, Los Angeles, California.

*reviewed June 23, 1938 AD.*

An Addendum to:  
Old Rock House  
Wharf and Chestnut Streets  
St. Louis City  
Missouri

HABS No. MO-31-5

HABS  
MO,  
96-SALU,  
5-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Addendum to OLD ROCK HOUSE

HABS No. MO-31-5

Location: Wharf and Chestnut Streets, St. Louis City, Missouri

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The following information was recorded by Alexander Piaget and Charles van Ravenswaay at the time the photograph was taken:

Built 1818 by fur trader Manuel Lisa. Important historical associations with westward expansion. Much altered, then torn down and reconstructed as originally designed. Part of Jefferson National Expansion Memorial (1939-1942). After restoration by the National Park Service, the NPS tore down the building and cleared the site.

PROJECT INFORMATION

The Piaget-van Ravenswaay Survey consists of a number of photographs, primarily of sites and structures in Missouri, which were taken before 1938 by Alexander Piaget and after that by Paul Piaget, both in conjunction with Charles van Ravenswaay. Photographs of buildings were incorporated into the HABS collection in 1985 by Laura Rupp and in 1986 by Deborah Fulton, HABS historians. A master list is available in the ~~file~~ records for MO-1800.